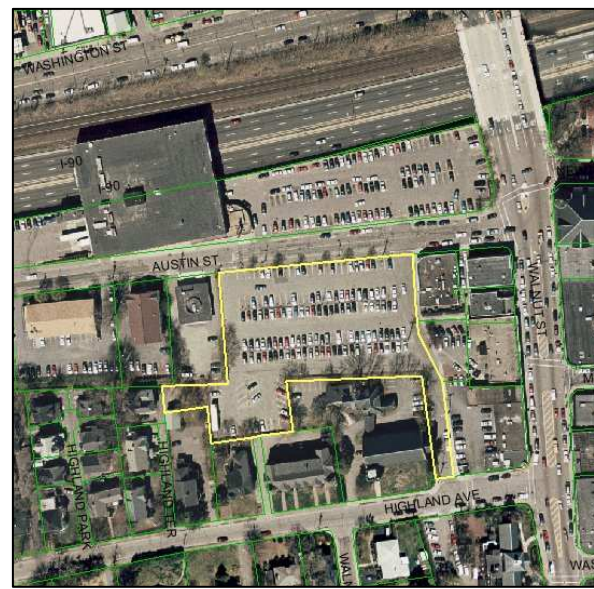
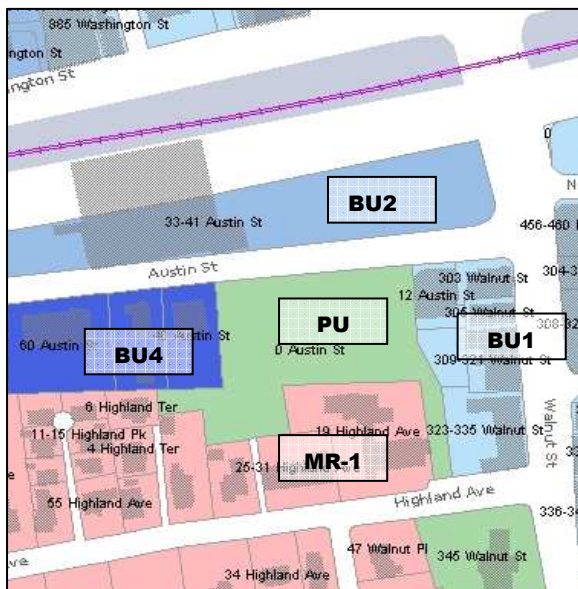


City of Newton, Massachusetts

AUSTIN STREET PARKING LOT REUSE

REQUEST FOR INTEREST



Prepared by the:

Newton Housing Action Plan Initiative (HAPI)
Newton Planning & Development Department (NPDD)
Newton Economic Development Commission (EDC)

Revised May 15, 2010

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1. INTRODUCTION: A DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

Over the past year and a half the City of Newton has undertaken studies regarding the possibility of soliciting proposals for development on what now is a municipal parking lot on Austin Street opposite Shaw's Newtonville store. The Mayor, a key committee of the Board of Aldermen, and a number of other Newton agencies and organizations have expressed hopeful support for this effort to bring new vitality to the Newtonville Village, create some village housing, and provide some fiscal benefit for the City. We are contacting a number of development organizations to hear from them whether they would be interested in pursuing the opportunity to be the developer of the site, and whether they have suggestions for improving on the project proposal as outlined in later sections of this RFI.

The idea for revitalizing village centers through redevelopment of underutilized publicly-owned sites began with efforts to update the City's *Comprehensive Plan* and is reflected in the language of the final *Newton Comprehensive Plan*, which was approved by the Board of Aldermen in November 2007. Early action items included in the *Newton Comprehensive Plan* that were housing-related were compiled and included in a Housing Action Plan Initiative (HAPI) formed by citizen volunteers. HAPI grew to include the City's Planning and Development Department and the Economic Development Commission (EDC).

The site to be developed is approximately 60,000 square feet, anticipated to be rezoned from the Public Use District to the Business 4 district that it now abuts. Its location is within ¼ mile of the Newtonville commuter rail station and is well served with express and other bus routes. All utilities are available and adequate for the extent of development anticipated. The pages that follow more fully describe the development site, the area characteristics, tentative guidance for what might be mandated or preferred in any proposed development, potential alternatives for City/private tenure arrangements, the anticipated developer selection and project development process, and noting the responses hoped for from those now being contacted.

Responding to this RFI is not required in order to be eligible for seeking selection for the site, nor does responding provide any priority for selection. However, participation by potential developers will surely be helpful to this community in moving forward with this potential development opportunity.

2. VICINITY AND SITE

THE VICINITY

The development site is located in the Newtonville neighborhood of Newton. It has excellent transportation access with a nearby commuter rail station, multiple MBTA buses traveling along Washington Street and Walnut Street, and minimal distance to Mass Pike exits at Newton Corner and West Newton.

The current Austin Street parking lot is located in the Newtonville village center. Both sides of Walnut Street in the vicinity of the property are lined with businesses, including several restaurants, coffee shops, and small-scale retail. The Shaw's supermarket on Austin Street, near Walnut Street, is the only large retail business in the vicinity. The Newtonville commercial area extends to the north side of the Mass Pike, with shops continuing along Walnut Street and along Washington Street. The commercial district is primarily surrounded by residences, and the new Newton North High School is currently under construction several blocks to the south down Walnut Street.

3,500 housing units (11 percent of the City of Newton's 31,800 housing units) are located within approximately 1/4 mile of the Newtonville commuter rail station.

THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

Location

The property in question is approximately 1.7 acres and has its frontage and access on Austin Street. The primary use of the property is as a public parking area with 159 spaces. The City acquired the majority of the property for use as a parking facility in 1947 through eminent domain. Of the parking spaces on the property, 32 are temporarily designated for Newton North High School, one is leased to a village business, one is damaged and cordoned off, and four are for persons with disabilities. One hundred and twenty-one spaces are available to the general public. The parking lot is also the location of a Goodwill trailer used to receive donated clothing and other goods. The property also includes the area marked as Philip Bram Way, which is currently used to access the rear of the several properties fronting Walnut Street, and is not anticipated to be used otherwise.

Zoning

The property is currently zoned as a Public Use district. Any development of the property will require a re-zoning to a different classification. Based on initial investigations, it appears that a Business 4 is likely to be the most appropriate zoning classification for the property in order to make a project feasible on the site. A special permit from the City's Board of Aldermen is required for any building over three stories, 36 feet in height, or 20,000 square feet in total floor area, so it is likely that any development on this site would require a special permit. HAPI has proposed several clarifications to the zoning provisions regarding mixed use developments in business districts that would facilitate the development of housing and retail on this site. *See Part 6. Studies Undertaken, Austin Street Zoning for more detail.*

Other City Regulations and Ordinances

Any proposed development must comply with all relevant City ordinances. The relevant ordinances include but are not limited to the light ordinance (Section 20-23), the fence ordinance (Section 20-41), and the noise ordinance (Section 20-13).

On the other hand, the property is not located within the nearby Newtonville Historic District, which is located entirely north of the Mass Pike, nor is it within any conservation resource areas (wetlands, floodplain, or riverfront). While it is within ¼ mile of a commuter rail station, Newton has adopted no Chapter 40R regulations.

Infrastructure

The development is currently accessed exclusively by Austin Street and a narrow connection (informally designated "Philip Bram Way" but not deeded or laid out as such) to Highland Avenue. Our impact analyses indicate that Austin Street itself can readily handle the trip volumes projected for it, but the intersections of Austin Street with Walnut Street and Lowell Avenue and Philip Bram Way with Highland Avenue will

each require attention, with the Austin Street/Walnut Street/Newtonville Avenue intersection likely to require substantial reconstruction. See Part 6 Studies Undertaken “Impact Studies” for further detail.

Any development would be required to install water, sewer, gas and electric connections as required for the development. The Engineering Division has expressed concern that the existing water main is only 6” and dates from the 1880s, such that its replacement might be necessary. Further, the Engineering Division is concerned that there is a history of backup with the sanitary sewerage in the area, making it likely that some sanitary sewerage facility replacement will be necessitated.

While any project on this site will require compliance with the City’s stormwater management requirements, virtually the entire site is now impervious so that it seems unlikely that any additional stormwater runoff volumes or peak rates will result from development. However, the Engineering Department believes that a CCTV inspection will be necessary to confirm that there are no structural issues with the drainage network.

Given that the development on this site would be only a relatively small contributor to each of those infrastructure concerns and that the City is the present owner of the site makes this a special case regarding the importance of assuring appropriate and adequate infrastructure service, with the question of cost contribution by any potential development different than would be the case with private land and private development, and is yet to be determined.

3. TENTATIVE DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

BASIC DEVELOPMENT EXPECTATIONS

The following is a draft statement of the City's expectations for what it would like to see in developer proposals for the Austin Street parking lot.

GENERAL

- The development site will be as shown on the drawing "Austin Street Development Parcel Sketch," dated 10/26/09 (*see Appendix*).
- Rights to the site will expire if construction does not begin within an agreed upon period following selection of the developer.
- Assume that the site will be rezoned into the Business 4 District (although alternative rezoning is possible), and that the Zoning Text Improvements listed on page 6-4 will have been considered by the Board of Aldermen for possible adoption. Suggestions for either further revision to the regulations applicable to the BU 4 district or rezoning of the site to a different district are welcome.
- At this point there is not a preference regarding the long-term questions of the form of tenure for the development and public/private division of responsibilities regarding provision and management of the public parking to be provided. Again, creative suggestions are welcome.

PARKING

- The parking needs created by both this new development and the displacement of existing parking must be met. With careful design of that development, skillful management of parking, and recognition of current under-utilization of existing spaces the number of spaces that are needed will be fewer than otherwise necessitated.
- The parking requirements of Newton's Zoning Ordinance will apply. Note that they provide wide discretion allowing reduction in the number of required spaces provided that the basis for doing so is well documented (see the Newton Zoning Ordinance section 30-19 generally, but especially 30-19(c)(3), 30-19(d)(2), 30-19(d)(18) and 30-19(m)).
- By working together, the developer and the City can make this an exemplar of accommodating access needs through support for alternatives to single-occupant auto travel and wasteful resource allocation for parking. The developer might contribute through such means as arranging for the sale and/or rental of certain of the parking spaces to be separated from the sale or rental of building space or

units, facilitating transit-sensitive mortgages for housing, accommodating short-term car rentals, and skillful design and location of bicycle accommodations, including the stalls required at Zoning Section 30-19(k).

- Perhaps the most critical and demanding period for managing parking will be during construction. Development staging and design must maintain public parking for no fewer than 85 autos either on the site or at newly utilized places off-site during business hours throughout the construction process.

HOUSING USES

- No fewer than 18 housing units shall be included in the development, preferably more, but not to the exclusion of other wanted uses as listed below.
- No fewer than 25% of the dwelling units shall be subject to restrictions on maximum income eligibility, at least half of which units shall be made eligible for DHCD's Subsidized Housing Inventory, the others to have income eligibility not to exceed 120% of the Area Median Income or a lower limit selected by the developer. The City will facilitate efforts by the developer to secure financial assistance to make the affordability share larger or deeper.
- No fewer than one unit or, if larger, 5% of the total units shall be constructed to be adaptable upon sale or rental for full accessibility for a person having a mobility disability. All units in the development shall be "visitable" by such a person.
- It is anticipated that the market for large units (three or more bedrooms) will not be as strong as it will be for small ones (two or fewer bedrooms), but there is no mandate or preference regarding the mix of units by number of bedrooms or other measure of size.
- A "live/work" arrangement in which both residential accommodation and non-accessory work take place within a single unit, with the division of uses within the space flexible over time, would be welcome at the developer's option.
- At this point there is no housing tenure preference, whether sale, rental or other.

BUSINESS USES

- The development shall include no less than 10,000 gross square feet of business floor area, including "live/work" space, if such is proposed.
- The developer is to provide a marketing plan that provides assurance that to the extent that the market allows, local preferences are reflected in the set of businesses being accommodated. These preferences have been expressed:

- Businesses that broaden the range of available goods and services, thus making this village center more attractive, benefiting both the public being served and those businesses now in Newtonville.
- At least initially, 1/3 of the business floor area shall be configured to accommodate businesses whose scale is consistent with that prevailing in Newtonville: most relatively small, with a few exceptions.
- Businesses that in add to the vitality of the Newtonville village center and enhance the mix of businesses.
- First floor uses that will encourage an active pedestrian-oriented streetscape.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- At least 10% of the development parcel should be beneficial open space, as defined in Section 30-1 of the Zoning Ordinance. Especially valuable would be the creation of a public outdoor gathering space, such as that in Newton Highlands at Lincoln and Hartford Streets adjacent to the parking area.
- This development should reflect the existing network of formal and informal pathways within the village center, adding to connectivity and ease of movement, and certainly not impairing existing passages.

PHYSICAL DESIGN

- Having this development compatible in visual scale with that of its surroundings is widely felt to be critically important. Buildings of four stories or more are likely to be essential to achieve all development goals but are relatively uncommon in the vicinity, so any such buildings proposed will require skillful design to achieve contextual compatibility.
- Scale compatibility can also be aided by breaking proposed floor area into more than a single principal building, or visually organizing the building mass into smaller sub-masses using designed variations in facade setback, roofline, and materials, with the smaller masses, where possible, on the street side of the building.
- An important contribution to the streetscape appearance that is sought would be treating the required setback line as a build-to line for at least a portion of its length, having a substantial share of the first floor façade providing visibility from the sidewalk or paths into building interiors, and providing no fewer than three pedestrian entrances from Austin Street.
- A key criterion in selecting among proposals will be assurance that the development will robustly serve the City's intent expressed at Zoning Section 30-

24(d)(5) that, “the site planning, building design, construction, maintenance or long-term operation of the premises will contribute significantly to the efficient use and conservation of natural resources and energy.”

- Street trees more promising than those existing.
- Undergrounding of overhead wires will be required through this portion of Austin Street.

OBSERVATIONS

This exploration of reuse of this parking lot is not about gaining an ordinary piece of development to pay a little bit in taxes, it is about trying to make Newtonville’s village center a much better place. Anything less than achieving the “Excellence in Place-Making” repeatedly exhorted in the City’s 2007 *Comprehensive Plan* will mean a failure to have captured a special opportunity. Achieving that excellence will require that a variety of participants strive for it in every aspect of this effort, including this one.

CITY/ PRIVATE ALTERNATIVE TENURE ARRANGEMENTS

There are many things to take into consideration in deciding just how the public and private interests should be managed in an integrated development for this site.

- Mixed-use development involving both public and private uses sharing the land and perhaps sharing one or more buildings.
- The City's cost of borrowing is lower than that of private bodies.
- A developer's interest in this undertaking, whether initially admitted or not, may well be much shorter-term than the City's, whose stewardship should give substantial weight to a quite long term.
- The laws related to a private/public partnership.

The respective roles will be clarified prior to any RFP. If those receiving the RFI have thoughts about the kind of relationship that would strengthen their interest in the opportunity, all suggestions are welcome at this time.

4. ANTICIPATED PROCESS

HOW TO PROCEED

The intention behind this report and the related draft Request for Interest is to facilitate a new City administration giving consideration to the possibility of inviting development of the Austin Street parking lot. By doing some of the background study that would inevitably have to precede an offering of the property, this effort should facilitate a well-informed decision on proceeding sooner than would otherwise have been the case. Even given this work, however, there remain many steps to go through before reuse can occur, as outlined in the following pages.

Following his own review of these materials, the Mayor would presumably want to discuss it with the relevant members of his administration and with the most concerned aldermen, being the three from Ward 2 and the members of the Real Property Reuse Committee. Although HAPI's tenure has ended, the other two organizations that co-sponsored this effort, the Economic Development Commission and the Planning & Development Department staff members, will still be available to assist in the considerations, as will the individuals who worked on this effort through HAPI.

The proposal, even more than prior to this effort, looks promising as a means of achieving the objectives it was intended to serve: actually getting some village center housing built, not just talked about, providing some net fiscal gain for the City, and bringing new vitality to the village center of Newtonville. Should the Mayor concur, the next step would be to send out a request for proposals, outlining what the City is looking for in development of the site. Responses to that will be critical in assessing the appropriateness of then undertaking the series of steps entailed to actually making an offering of the site for development.

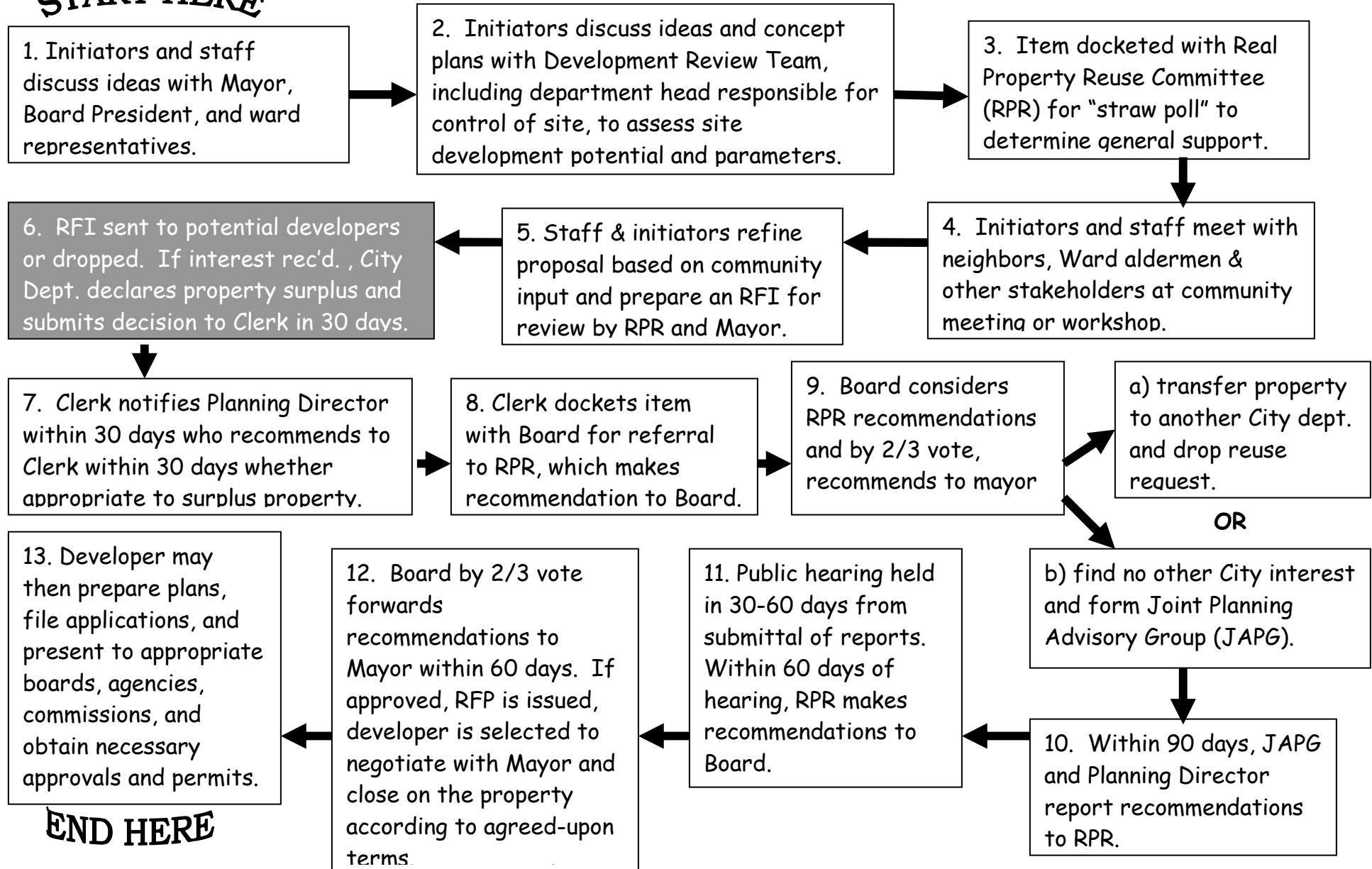
THE 13-STEP PROCESS

The chart on the following page summarizes the anticipated process for developing the Austin Street parking lot and includes some steps that will have been completed before the RFI is issued. Accomplishments to date include the following actions:

- On May 26, 2009, City staff and representatives from HAPI and the EDC met with the Real Property Reuse Committee of the Board of Aldermen to discuss possibilities for redeveloping the Austin Street parking lot. City staff has since reviewed the concepts with the current administration, Board president, and Ward representatives. The Committee took a “straw poll” in support of continuing efforts to investigate options for reuse.
- A survey of local businesses was conducted over the summer (2009) months (and included in another section of this RFI) and a neighborhood meeting was held on September 24, 2009 for the purpose of discussing redevelopment possibilities and to solicit input (a summary of basic development expectations expressed at the meeting is also included in this RFI).
- HAPI and City staff prepared this RFI with input from the EDC and confirmed the support of the Real Property Reuse Committee of the Board of Aldermen and EDC in early December and forwarded the RFI the Mayor-elect at the end of December.
- Upon receipt of responses to this RFI, the Director of Planning and Development assist the Board of Aldermen and Mayor in determining the appropriateness of surplussing the property and the manner in which the subject property should be used, as described in Sec.2-7 (Sale or lease of City-owned real property) of the City’s Revised Ordinances, 2007 and outlined in the following chart.

SUMMARY OF CIVIC INITIATORS' "STEP-BY-STEP" REAL PROPERTY REUSE PROCESS

START HERE



5. REQUESTED RESPONSE

The City of Newton and this potential project would greatly benefit by your responding to this request in these ways.

- 1. Your organization's potential interest in pursuing this project if it proceeds.** Your indicating interest or not, taken together with the responses of others, will give us a better understanding of how likely it is that there will be parties interested in pursuing this opportunity. If your interest is conditional ("only if the RFP doesn't get sent out for at least two years") let us know that, too.
- 2. Your thoughts about the "Basic Development Expectations."** If you see ways in which they might be improved so as to make your interest stronger, let us know.
- 3. Your thoughts regarding a public/private tenure arrangement.** Parking for the general public is a public function; retailing and this housing presumably are not. In an integrated scheme, how do you suggest those divided responsibilities and interests would best be arranged?
- 4. Your thoughts regarding the outlined process and timing for the selection of a developer and arranging for the developer to begin.** Much of that is dictated by ordinance. It can be changed, but not without likely strain and delay, but there is easy flexibility regarding timing. The suggestions received will certainly be made public, but not the identity of those making the suggestions unless they themselves do so.

We would appreciate responses not later than **June 30, 2010**. City staff will be available to answer questions regarding the RFI on June 15 from 8 am to 9 am in Room 209 in City Hall. If you have questions or need additional materials in the meantime, please contact Candace Havens at 617-796-1120 or chavens@newtonma.gov.

6. STUDIES UNDERTAKEN

THE PROCESS

Newton's 2007 *Comprehensive Plan* and Newton's Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) 2009 *Final Report* both call for exploring the reuse of underutilized City-owned properties as a potentially valuable step. The *Comprehensive Plan* cites it as a way of achieving housing in suitable locations (Housing Element, page 5-50). The *CAG Report* suggests it as a way of possibly gaining needed revenue (Municipal Revenue Report, page 3-21). The Housing Action Plan Initiative (HAPI), given its charge to pursue implementation of actions already contained in existing plans, included site reuse exploration in its initial agenda of possible actions (HAPI memo "Initiative Tasks," July 6, 2008 and October 24, 2008). The Economic Development Commission, long interested in that approach, joined in the effort.

A large array of publicly-owned sites had been briefly explored by the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee several years earlier. In 2008 when this effort began two public sites were actively being considered for reuse, the air rights over the Riverside T Station, and a Newton Centre site at Centre, Wyman and Willow Streets. The municipal parking lot on Austin Street in Newtonville across from the Shaw's over the Turnpike was chosen from among all of those to be the site to be pursued in this effort. Reuse of the Austin Street parking lot had long been advocated by the Aldermen from Ward 2 as a means of bringing vitality to the Newtonville village center. Potential development of the site had been illustrated in earlier studies, seemed to have real potential, and its reuse appeared to be more straightforward than the other sites. It is a flat rectangular parcel, well-served by both auto and public transportation, widely criticized in its present state, large enough to be interesting but not overwhelmingly large.

Following some initial studies, the possibility for reuse of this site was presented in May, 2009 to the Aldermen's Real Property Reuse Committee; which strongly supported giving this possibility further study. The Planning and Development Department, which had been of assistance from the beginning, became particularly active in the effort following that evidence of support.

Our technical studies of project feasibility and impacts have been complemented by careful outreach including meetings with Aldermen, interviews with nearby merchants, and two workshops for interested citizens from both that neighborhood and across the City. Based upon site examination, zoning studies, sketch designs, financial analysis, impact analysis and community input from nearby businesses among others, it now appears that there is a real possibility for achieving the original intentions for development on the site: bringing new services and vitality to the area, providing at least modest financial benefit to the City, and adding well-located housing, including below-market units, while continuing to provide adequate parking but also encouraging lessened auto reliance.

The next major step in the process is to provide to the new Mayor this report and a draft of a “Request for Interest (RFI).” Should the Mayor agree, the RFI would be sent to potential developers of the site. That step can gain the expert insights about the proposal that are best provided not by abstract studies but by input from those who might actually undertake the project. We hope that the Mayor will agree, and will forward the materials, probably with revisions, to potentially interested parties early in 2010.

If the input from that step is encouraging and the state of the economy supports moving forward, the RFI will be revised to become a Request for Proposals (“RFP”). There then will still be many remaining steps required by various Newton ordinances, most importantly Chapter 2 Section 2-7 of the City Ordinances, “Sale or lease of city-owned real property.” Those steps then will be followed, as well as other steps whose importance has been identified by the studies, including seeking a number of technical improvements to Newton’s zoning regulations.

Should it turn out that for reasons of the market or the Mayor’s priorities that proceeding with this reuse in early 2010 proves to be inappropriate, the effort to get the proposal to this point still will have been worthwhile. First, this work has resulted in critical attention being brought to the very complex process this City requires for reuse of real property, especially in a case such as this one, where the effort is being initiated not by a for-profit developer, but by a civic organization having neither resources nor intentions for being a developer. That attention can possibly benefit this or other proposals at some later time.

Second, careful examination of the zoning as applied to this case has focused attention on a substantial number of provisions that if revised could go far towards removing existing barriers to village center and mixed-use development, whether on public land or not. Draft revisions to address those concerns have been prepared for consideration by the Board of Aldermen.

AUSTIN STREET LOT ZONING

There are three questions regarding zoning that bear on the Austin Street lot reuse: the zoning district into which the parcel is to be placed, the timing for that change, and a series of zoning text revisions to make the zoning “friendlier” not only for this project but also for other mixed use and village center developments.

The District for Rezoning the Austin Street Lot

The Austin Street parking lot is zoned as a Public Use District, unlike any other abutting property, but is consistent with how City-owned parking areas commonly are zoned elsewhere in the City. The residential and business uses contemplated in the reuse of that parking area are not allowed in a Public Use district per Zoning Section 30-6. Either a change to the provisions of Section 30-6 or a change to the Zoning Map will be necessary for development such as is being considered for that lot.

Changing the provisions of Section 30-6 would raise concerns at many locations across the City, so has not been further considered. Creating a new basic or overlay district for this small site has often been mentioned by people, but not given serious consideration.

The development parcel is abutted by lots variously zoned BU1 (Walnut Street), BU2 (Shaws), BU4 (Austin Street’s south side west of the lot in question), and MR-1 (Highland Avenue).

Initial design explorations have confirmed the original expectation that accommodating sufficient revenue-producing development to make reuse at least self-supporting would be severely challenging unless development to at least five stories above grade were to be allowed. There are existing buildings in the vicinity that are of similar or greater height, so allowing that would not allow an unprecedented height. Newton Zoning allows more than four stories in height only in the Business 4 District and in PMBD Development (which at present is limited to the BU4 district). Accordingly, rezoning to BU4 is probably the most appropriate option available.

Rezoning this site into the BU4 district would simply be an extension of the district already existing on its side of this street, assuring that this could not be construed as “spot zoning.”

Rezoning Timing

Rezoning the parking lot prior to issuance of an RFI would have been inappropriate, but it is important that the RFI make clear the intentions of those issuing the RFI to seek rezoning, presumably to BU4, but holding open alternatives should the responses to the RFI suggest that. It may be appropriate to consider rezoning prior to issuing an RFP, since having appropriate zoning in place, recently approved by the Board of Aldermen, will remove a major uncertainty that might otherwise discourage proposals. The process of rezoning the site will also give to the Board of Aldermen as a whole an early opportunity to express its views on the reuse being explored.

Zoning Text Improvements

The processes of considering the district into which the site should be rezoned and of making test building designs on the site revealed a number of ambiguities and conflicts in the current zoning regulations. Revisions have been drafted to resolve those impediments. Hopefully, the proposed changes will have been considered by the Board of Aldermen and outcomes clarified by the time that at RFP is issued. Briefly, the items proposed are as follows.

1. Amend “grandfathering” rules to give business-zoned lots much the same protection against zoning changes imposed after their creation that is enjoyed by residential uses.
2. Allow second-floor dwellings in the Mixed-Use 1 district without need for a special permit, just as they are now allowed in Mixed-Use 2, Business 1, Business 2, Business 3 and Business 4 districts to encourage mixed uses.
3. Make the density rule in the Mixed-Use 1 and 2 districts essentially the same as it now is in Business 1, Business 2, Business 3 and Business 4 districts, finally making mixed use feasible in the currently misnamed Mixed Use districts.
4. Add a new sub-section to the text explaining how the various dimensional rules apply in the case of residential and commercial uses on the same lot.
5. Add a definition of “lot area” to the zoning regulations. It would clarify whether or not things like that paved link between Austin and Highland at the City parking lot in the Newtonville village center can be counted as “lot area” even though it is used like a street.
6. Fix the footnotes in the table of dimensional regulations for Commercial districts: they not only are confusing, they are often in direct conflict with each other.

DESIGN STUDIES

In order to assess the potential for development on the Austin Street lot, there have been a number of design studies made depicting its potential use. To avoid giving a false impression of a “preferred scheme,” none of them are depicted here graphically, but each contributed to the current understanding of the site and its possibilities.

The Sketch in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan

In the preparation of the *Comprehensive Plan* a series of sketches were made by Architect John Wilson, a CPAC member, with support by Payette Associates, his firm. They depicted potential development on a series of locations across the City involving underutilized public land, with the intent of illustrating that at least in theory they contained substantial development potential. One of those shown in the *Newton Comprehensive Plan* is an ambitious scheme for this site and more, extending across not only the Austin Street parking lot but also the Shaws parking lot, crossing the Massachusetts Turnpike to include new development fronting onto the south side of Washington Street.

The Summer 2008 Sasaki Sketches

In the early summer of 2008 a dozen summer interns at Sasaki Associates, an international award-winning design firm in Watertown, undertook a two-week workshop to design plans for a future Newtonville village center. Not bounded by too much reality and endowed with great creativity and graphic skill, they generated and presented a stimulating mass of material, linking Newtonville to the whole of Newton and to the region, with proposals for massive amounts of new development on air rights over the Turnpike, in higher buildings along both Washington Street and Walnut Street, and in each scheme showing a very large structure on the Austin Street lot.

The June 2009 Workshop Sketches

To support a HAPI workshop discussion about “New Uses on Public Sites,” John Wilson and Payette Associates again generated sketches of a possible approach for the Austin Street lot, showing in both plan and section how that space might be utilized more realistically than was shown in the earlier sketches, though still not confining its proposals to the City-owned land, giving in to the temptation to show improvements on the Shaws lot, as well, and even quietly showing a scheme for improved commuter rail station access.

The Summer 2009 Numbers Sketches

In an effort to enable calculations of zoning-compliant configurations, Philip Herr produced a series of scaled floor plans for a very simple structure to contain retailing, housing, and the necessary parking for them and to replace the spaces displaced. The resulting building was seriously lacking in terms of qualities being sought for this site, but it did produce an illustration of how much housing and how much retailing a four-

story building with a modest amount of its parking below-grade might be able to accommodate. It provided the physical template for initial pro forma financial analyses.

The Fall 2009 Birds-Eye Sketch

Another Newton Architect, Rick Heym, was persuaded to explore better shaping an essentially similar amount and kind of space, departing from the four-story constraint of the “Numbers Sketches,” and producing a massing study that would show a positive addition to the village. While only a very early sketch, it did indeed illustrate that the same amount of building volume as earlier established could indeed be shaped in a way that far better served the design intentions that then were beginning to take shape.

PARKING STUDIES

Maintaining adequate parking in Newtonville is essential to this project's success, so parking has been a key element in these studies. Four sources have contributed to our understanding of parking needs and opportunities:

- Studies of actual usage of the Austin Street parking lot and the sources of that usage;
- Interviews with owners and managers of nearby businesses and other establishments;
- Requirements of the Newton Zoning Ordinance, including its many provisions allowing flexibility; and
- A background of understanding drawn from the experience of this and similar communities, professional experience of participating professionals, and the rapidly developing literature on approaches to parking management, including that in the *Newton Comprehensive Plan*.

Context: Parking Generators And Facilities

Figure P-1 delineates the set of parcels primarily served by the Austin Street lot. The uses are predominantly business, with parking, the senior center and an inactive church the major exceptions. The Newtonville businesses on Washington Street north of I-90 were not included, since despite the bridge, the turnpike is an effective barrier to pedestrian traffic. Also outside the district is a commuter rail stop--the last stop on the MBTA's Framingham/Worcester line before Boston--accessed via stairs from the bridge. Twelve-hour metered spaces are located for commuters on the south side of Washington Street, such that many commuters need not cross a street to get from their cars to the train, although some do use the Austin Street lot.

Inside the noted area there are multiple nodes of activity:

- Shaw's Supermarket is by far the largest business in the district. Its private, dedicated lot is across the street from the Austin Street lot. For the most part, the eastern end of the Shaw's lot, closest to Walnut Street, functions as a public lot. Short term users dominate, but a few rail commuters do use the lot as well.
- The City of Newton Senior Center is another anchor in the district. Its dedicated lot holds 14 cars, and is insufficient for the Center's peak demand.
- The shops on the western side of Walnut Street, closest to the Austin Street lot, include three banks, two coffee shops, two shoe stores, two salons and a few other retailers. Employees of these shops park in the dedicated lots adjacent to their buildings. The shops on the eastern side of Walnut Street--a bookstore, CVS, two bakeries, two restaurants, and other stores--also have dedicated lots behind them used predominantly by employees.
- West of the lot on Austin Street are two office buildings and a bank, each with

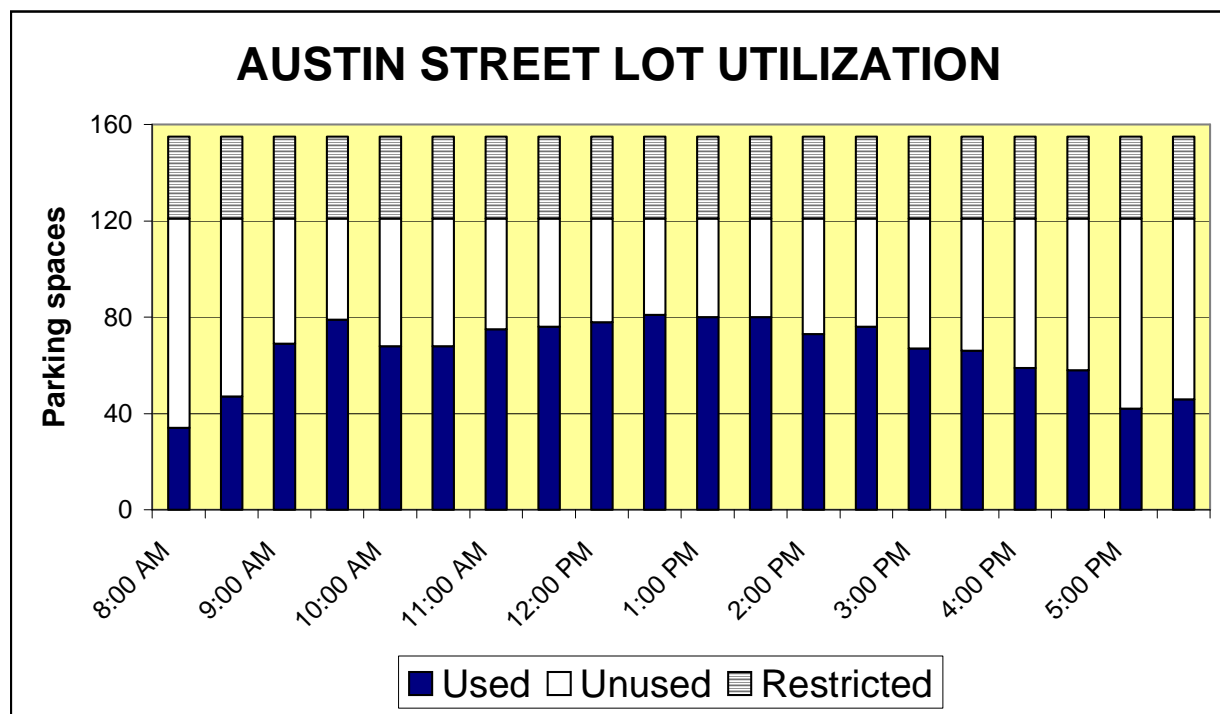
dedicated, apparently adequate parking lots.

- Finally, in the northeast corner of the district is a former church renovated as offices and a handful of small businesses. Most of the office employees park in either dedicated off-street spots or at un-metered spots on the side streets east of Walnut.

Adequacy of the Austin Street Lot

Interviews and observation indicate that the Austin Street lot accommodates demand from all of these nodes. Shoppers at Shaw's, especially those who have difficulty walking, are prone to use the spots in the northeast corner of the lot, which is closest to the front door. However, this is generally no more than a few cars at one time. Some patrons of the office buildings on Austin Street (which have their own dedicated lots) do short-term parking in the lot, although again these numbers are small. Employees from both sides of Walnut Street use the 12-hour spaces in the Austin Street lot, as do rail commuters. Visitors to the Senior Center often use the lot as well.

The City Traffic Engineer conducted a 2007 study of the lot and found a peak occupancy of 90 vehicles. Counts we made in October and in the two weeks before Christmas 2009 found a maximum of 81 parked cars, with the sole exception that December 24th at 12:45 PM yielded 106 parked cars and sixteen empty spots (the adjacent Shaw's supermarket lot was full). At the time of peak utilization in the October studies, 35% of parked cars present ended up staying in their spots for more than 5 hours, and 12% stayed for less than an hour. (*See Attachment 2 for more details*).



Parking turn-over studies further support the observation that the current number of available parking spaces is more than adequate. There is relatively little long-term parking in the designated short-term spaces, and vacant spaces are usually widely available in both short-term metered spaces and in long-term metered spaces.

Business Interviews

Nineteen interviews were conducted with business owners and managers within the parcels described above, designed to learn about parking usage and experience, among other things. A variety of things were observed through that effort (more detail in the Appendix).

- About 80% of those working in those businesses drive themselves to work. Most of those people park in dedicated spaces adjacent to where they work.
- The overall observation was that parking arrangements are generally adequate. Most reported no parking complaints from customers, although a few did occasionally hear them.
- There were some reports of management problems with the dedicated on-premises spaces, which typically are leased from the owner of the premises
- Some employees park in the Austin Street lot, but none are reported to do so in short-term spaces, a sharp difference from experience in Newton Centre. Our parking turnover studies support that observation.

Zoning Provisions

Newton's zoning code would appear to conflict with the intent to create compact, vibrant downtowns. Its parking standards are insensitive to location of the development relative to transit or retail, and the code expressly disallows counting spaces in municipal lots for meeting parking requirements. However, Newton Zoning (at Section 30-19(m)) does empower the board of aldermen to authorize reduced parking provisions if doing so is in the public interest. The main public interest in the case of the Austin Street development is the vibrancy of Newtonville's business district. In our initial scoping studies to provide a basis for financial feasibility considerations, we estimated parking needs based on the existing zoning, assuming that reductions would be allowed where not inconsistent with those that have been granted in Newton to others in similar circumstances in recent years.

Considerations For Minimizing Parking Construction

We want no parking spaces to be constructed and then wasted, as are many spaces in the existing parking lot. Only those spaces that will effectively support Newtonville businesses and the proposed development should be built. The Austin Street development should exemplify "excellence in placemaking," per the 2007 *Comprehensive Plan*, and make the strongest contribution it can to the vibrancy of

Newtonville's commercial core. Underutilized parking is expensive and a blight on any downtown, and does not belong here.

Flexible and creative approaches to meet and manage parking demand are welcome. Among them are these.

- Simply pooling parking supply to serve multiple uses is an efficiency-gainer which downtown municipal parking lots as well as shopping center parking lots routinely provide, but individual businesses in Newtonville commonly do not. Perhaps as part of this development effort the village and certainly the occupants of new development can move further towards sharing parking resources and gaining the efficiencies which that provides.
- “Unbundling residential parking” entails including at most only one space per unit within the standard unit sales price, thereby giving buyers or renters an incentive to not garage a second car, but not forbidding it, just charging extra for it. This has been shown to reduce parking demand and therefore needed requirements, but only in cases where there is a well functioning market for the spaces. The Austin Street development, being surrounded by offices and retail, and involving planned municipal metered parking, is in a perfect location for such a market.
- “Cashing out” parking entails each employee being offered usage of a parking spot free of charge, but then being paid the value of the spot if choosing not to use it because they use an alternate means of transportation. Cashing out parking has been demonstrated to reduce single-passenger auto commuting substantially. A simpler approach to pricing parking, roughly equivalent to “cashing out” parking, is to provide no employee parking free of charge, which obligates employees to pay by the day at a meter (or park far away from the business at an unmetered spot). This approach to pricing, removing the free parking and leaving employees to use the meters, is being contemplated for a development proposed for Newton Centre. Whereas the Austin Street parcel will continue to include public metered parking after the development, it would be natural to use the same approach here.
- A fourth promising approach is to make space in the lot for car sharing services. These services, such as Zipcar, allow multiple households to share a single car. There should be a substantial market for car sharing in an Austin Street development, where a grocery store, a commuter rail, and village shops are right outside the front door.



Figure P1. Newtonville business district impacted by the Austin Street lot

LEARNING FROM THE COMMUNITY

From its outset, this project has made carefully structured efforts to learn from all parts of the community regarding what would best serve Newton if provided on this site. The specific devices have included the following.

- **June workshop.** One of the three break-out groups at the HAPI June 2009 workshop explored “New Uses on Public Sites,” with the Austin Street project as the primary subject. Support for affordable housing was the strongest single observation, with support for uses that would enliven the village also strong, importance of City revenue trailing far behind, but still cited as an objective, along with many other ideas set forward in a rich and well-recorded exchange.
- **WickedLocal blogs.** A brief report in the *TAB*, also placed on the web and illustrated with an oblique air view of the site, sparked an extended and sharp blogging exchange about the proposal for reuse of the site, ranging from well-informed statements supporting the project’s intentions to sometimes wildly inaccurate rants, but out of it all emerged in fact a useful dialog about “smart growth” and “affordability” as well as about the site and its future, resulting if nothing else in those two terms being abjured in our writing.

Easy to disparage, in fact the dialog was of great value in identifying commonly held views, sensitive topics, areas of support, and areas about which to act with special care. Regrettably, virtually none of the bloggers attended the workshop that followed or, if they did, their blogged views were not repeated in person.

- **September workshop.** The September HAPI event was wholly devoted to the Austin Street lot reuse. Attendees broke into two groups, one comprising people with businesses or homes in the immediate vicinity, and the other for interested participants from further away. The differences in views between the two groups were more marginal than fundamental: both strongly supported the inclusion of both housing and business in the development, wanted the businesses to be relatively small and expected that the housing units would also be quite small.

There was real concern for scale compatibility on design, but wanted that achieved by means other than a low building height requirement. Once again, fiscal benefit was seen as vital, but again with a nuanced view that takes into account more than just the sale price of the property and initial tax levy contributions.

- **Merchant interviews.** More than twenty Newtonville business proprietors were interviewed during this effort, most following a carefully designed interview protocol designed to gain their perspectives first on their parking experience and needs, followed with more open-ended questions regarding what uses they would favor on the Austin Street lot and other observations they might have regarding the effort.

There were some consistent observations, in particular, recognizing that development that increases foot traffic in Newtonville would be helpful, coupled with concern whether that could in fact be achieved. Concerns were raised about the value of new businesses redundant with existing ones, and some skepticism about the business contribution from a limited amount of new housing.

Parking is clearly a major concern, although it is evident that the interviewed merchants view the current supply as being adequate, although not always well-managed.

- **“Expectations” responses.** A four-page item from the Request for Interest titled “Basic Development Expectations” was circulated to a substantial set of people chosen because of their past involvement with this effort, their positions, or their professional backgrounds, asking for suggestions. The “Expectations” piece outlined a draft of what development on the site must or must not do and what it might preferably do or not do. It has elicited a great deal of response, more responses from more people than has any other single item that this effort has circulated. They ranged from simple “good job” responses to multi-page listing of things that were being questioned.

FINANCIAL STUDIES

First came the observation that the Austin Street parking lot is just that, a flat piece of land in a Newton village center with no buildings on it, close to commuter rail and buses, amidst bustling businesses, and with lots of enthusiasm among residents and elected officials for a stimulating replacement: it seemed like a can't-fail enterprise. Then came the recognition that all those busy parking spaces will have to be replaced in a structure, at a steep cost per space, and the further recognition that if this were a municipal effort all parties would expect every aspect to be done in an exemplary way, and the importance of making sure that the numbers will work became a less and less nominal exercise.

The design of the process is to invite developers to tell us whether what we are shaping looks doable to them, relying on that as our primary source of understanding about feasibility, but along the way we needed some guidance regarding fiscal realities. People with development backgrounds suggested making the numbers work but both pushing down to accommodate some of the parking and build upward to accommodate enough development to produce the value needed to make it work. Literally “back of the envelope” sketches made that seem plausible.

Subsequently, a four-stage analysis of financial feasibility has been carried out by volunteer members of the group doing the studies, each of whom has some background in development and pro formas, but none of whom claim expertise at doing that. Review comments were sought from others with relevant backgrounds and are reflected in the analyses, such that at this point it is possible to draw some observations about project financial feasibility.

The analyses started by assuming 24,000 square feet of commercial space and 21 housing units, 4 of them below-market priced, and 265 parking spaces, later lowered to 170 spaces. Total development costs exclusive of site acquisition ranged between \$16 million and \$20 million, with revenues a bit over \$18 million, a small loss for the first case, a clear but not robust profit for the second case.

At the moment development activity in Massachusetts is at an unusually low ebb, especially for the types of development that are high among the likely components of a development on the Austin Street lot: housing and retail services. That inevitably colors estimates now being made for both future returns and for near-term costs. On the other hand, there will be no less than another year and possibly considerably more before the City is prepared to authorize such development on this site. We have tried to look at costs and revenues not just for this moment but for a point in some uncertain future, which means that no matter how hard we try and how skilled we might be, precision isn't possible.

The most difficult case would be if the current number of parking spaces in the Austin Street lot were to be replaced in a new structure at costs per space that could easily range from \$15,000 to \$30,000 per space, and new development were to be provided with the number of parking spaces required by Newton Zoning before applying any of

the downward flexibility that the Ordinance does provide (technically, zero parking could be required if a case could be made for it), it would take a great deal of new revenue-producing development to cover the cost of parking, even if the site were given away by the City, likely obliging both at least one level of below-grade parking and a structure at least five stories above grade.

If instead, a better designed approach to parking and parking management were to be taken, substantial reductions in the number of required parking spaces could be made, and it appears likely that the buildings involved would be feasible at four stories, even if a modest fee were to be charged by the City for the use of the site. At five stories the numbers become more comfortable, enabling more flexibility in the “extras” that the City might want to ask for.

Before actually proceeding with site disposition, more reliable analyses need to be made. Our hope is that the response to an RFI will provide a better understanding than that which we now have, good enough to allow design of a well-designed request for proposals that would be likely to draw a number of competent responses proposing the kind of development that would serve Newtonville and the City well.

IMPACT STUDIES

In exploring the potential for reuse of the Austin Street parking lot, two sketch scenarios have been made illustrating the extent of development that appears to be feasible. The “Modest” scenario is based on the smallest amount of development likely to be sufficient to enable reuse to be carried out without reliance on financial support from the City or any other “outside” source (other than the site value). The “Aggressive” scenario is based on the largest amount of development judged likely to secure approval under the various regulations that are applicable. The potential impacts of those amounts of development were then estimated in order to provide a very approximate sense of how large the costs and benefits might be. Table 1 below summarizes the results. More detail and sources are contained in tables 2 through 4 at the end of this section. No analysis of parking “impacts” as an externality has been made, since a clear rule for site reuse will be that there must be created adequate provisions for both the parking demand created by the new activities on this site and for the demands now being served by the existing parking.

Table 1. **AUSTIN STREET LOT SUMMARY IMPACTS**

ELEMENTS		Current total	Austin lot scenarios		Village % increase	
			Modest	Aggressive	Modest	Aggressive
SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT ASSUMPTIONS					Village Ctr % increase	
Non-residential floor area (sq. ft.)						
	Retailing		9,000	24,000		
	Other non-residential		9,000	0		
	TOTAL	680,000	18,000	24,000	2.6%	3.5%
Jobs		1,360	44	48	3.2%	3.5%
Housing units						
	Market-rate		14	24		
	Below-market		4	6		
	TOTAL	250	18	30	7.2%	12.0%
Cabot School enrollment		433	3	5	0.7%	1.2%
Austin St daily traffic (ADT)		8,200	780	1,290	9.5%	15.7%
PROJECT SITE (direct tax levy and parking fee impacts only)					Site % increase	
New Growth tax levy		\$0	\$206,600	\$303,800		
City annual revenue		\$50,000	\$260,000	\$350,000	420%	600%
City annual cost		\$40,000	\$230,000	\$310,000	480%	680%
City net revenue		\$10,000	\$30,000	\$40,000	200%	300%

9/20/2009

Austin St Impact 3|Summary

The Modest Scenario contains 18,000 square feet of non-residential (and non-parking) floor area, half of it retailing, half of it some other use, probably offices. In addition, it contains 18 dwelling units, of which four are restricted for sale or rental to households having incomes below 80% of the regional median. The development also contains sufficient parking to serve both the parking demand created by the new development and also the parking demand being served by the existing parking lot.

The Aggressive scenario contains roughly a third more development than the Modest one: 24,000 square feet of non-residential floor area, all of it for retail use, and 30 dwelling units, six of them restricted for households having incomes below 80% of the regional median.

The Newtonville “village center” used for impact comparison is that used in the 2007 *Newton Comprehensive Plan* in estimating existing business development, expanded a little to include contiguous residential development, and for enrollment comparisons expanded more to include the whole Cabot School District.

Non-Residential Development

The *Comprehensive Plan* projects Citywide Base growth in employment and business floor area to ultimately be about 9% above 2005 levels, while the High projections indicate about a 12% ultimate growth (page 3-5 in that *Plan*), far lower than the 70% increase possible if the full amount of growth theoretically feasible under zoning were actually realized. If the Newtonville village center were to grow at the rate indicated in the *Plan* for the City as a whole it would ultimately add some 60-80,000 square feet of non-residential floor area.

The amount of business floor area being considered for the Austin Street site in this effort, currently in the range from 18,000 to 24,000 square feet, would be a significant but not large share of the growth expected for this village by the *Comprehensive Plan*, so it is perfectly consistent with that *Plan* in its size, especially if it proves to be an enhancement to the village, resulting in attracting further development on other sites within the village center.

Job growth is projected based upon typical ratios of employment to floor area, checked against City-wide data on both jobs and business floor area. Not surprisingly, the percentage growth in jobs is similar to the percentage growth in non-residential floor area, and is comfortably consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Residential Development

The core of this village area contains very few dwellings, so any additions of housing will represent large percentage increases. The *Comprehensive Plan* anticipates in the Base case an ultimate addition of 3,500 dwelling units Citywide, 1,600 of them in village centers and mixed use developments, while in the preferred High scenario 4,500 units would ultimately be added, 2,600 of them in village centers and mixed-use developments. The Modest and Aggressive Austin Street scenarios represent just about

1% of the Base and High *Comprehensive Plan* Citywide figures, respectively. Given that context, to develop this site for fewer units than the Modest scenario shows would probably be viewed as a lost opportunity to use a municipal property to implement the City's own *Plan* or, alternatively, a reason to reconsider the provisions or estimates of that *Plan*.

School enrollment is projected based upon current relationships between housing units and enrollments for the City as a whole, and for recent multi-family developments in Newton. The City has about one-third as many pupils enrolled in public schools as it has dwelling units, and School Department studies of recent multi-family mixed-use development's impact on enrollment indicate that those new developments consistently have about that same ratio of pupils to housing units¹. On that basis, the Modest scenario would add about 6 pupils to K-12 school enrollments, and the Aggressive scenario would add about 10 pupils. Of most concern would be the affected elementary school, Cabot School, for which an added 4 to 6 pupils could be expected, equivalent to about a 1% increase in current enrollment in that school.

Traffic Impacts

The Modest scenario new development on the Austin Street parking lot is projected to be the origin or destination of about 800 average daily vehicle trips in addition to those currently related to the lot, while the Aggressive scenario would similarly generate about 1,400 new vehicle trip ends. In both cases, most of those coming and going trips would use Austin Street and Walnut Street. While there are no recent traffic counts available, analysis using standard ITE trip generation rates indicates that the uses on the Walnut to Lowell Avenue block of Austin Street probably generate about 8,000 vehicle trips per day, most of them probably connecting to origins or destinations via Walnut Street. City staff members have indicated that the Village portion of Walnut Street carries between 15,000 and 20,000 vehicle trips per day.

Austin Street itself is not seriously congested, but its intersection with Walnut and Newtonville Avenue is a notorious problem, causing some to alter their routes to avoid it. The Modest scenario would add about 10% to Austin Street traffic, while the Aggressive scenario would add about 16% to it, not enough to result in significant congestion on Austin Street except at its intersection with Walnut and Newtonville Avenues.

The new traffic from the Modest scenario would add perhaps 2% to the total amount of traffic to be handled at that intersection, while the Aggressive scenario would add perhaps 3% to that total. Even without real data or analysis, it is clear that ANY increase in traffic at that location could significantly worsen delays there for vehicles entering it from either the east or the west, perhaps enough to encourage the City to undertake intersection improvements, and perhaps enough to justify asking any future developer of the parking lot site to contribute to that resolution by, for example, paying for necessary engineering.

¹ Newton Public Schools, "Enrollment Analysis Report," 2008-2009 to 2013-2014," November, 2008.

Fiscal Impacts

An analysis of municipal costs and net revenues from the two Austin Street scenarios has been sketched. It does not deal with revenues other than parking fees and property taxes and costs paid through those two revenue sources, and it does not deal with secondary impacts, such as those of additional development that this effort might stimulate or of existing or future development elsewhere in the City that is in effect “replaced” by this development, or the impact of this development on state and federal funding formulas. This “direct impact” analysis indicates net revenues as being quite small, which is not unexpected based upon the analyses done as part of the 2007 *Comprehensive Plan*. Indirect revenues and costs might well be a great deal more substantial than these direct ones, but they now remain too speculative to quantify.

The Modest scenario would at FY09 rates provide about \$200,000 in New Growth tax revenue, the Aggressive scenario about \$300,000. However, added municipal costs needing to be covered through tax levy and parking fees (other fees and non-tax revenues were excluded from the analysis for simplicity) resulted in estimated net fiscal benefit of only \$30,000 for the Modest scenario and \$40,000 for the Aggressive scenario, based on ratios of costs to tax levy revenues by category of use as calculated for the 2007 *Consolidated Plan*,

Final Observations

Each of the projected impacts falls within the range anticipated, so that their modest scale is no surprise. Any one development of this size can't be expected to have a large-scale direct fiscal impact, good or bad, in an established community. More substantial impacts will accrue, if they do, as a result of whether or not the improvements on that one parcel lead to further improvements on nearby premises, giving added vibrancy to Newtonville's critically important village center. That, in turn, will depend in large part upon the skill with which the property reuse is guided by the City.

Table 2. AUSTIN STREET BASIC IMPACTS

ELEMENTS	Modest Scenario	Aggressive Scenario
DEVELOPMENT		
Non-residential floor area (sq. ft.)	18,000	24,000
Retailing	9,000	24,000
Other non-residential	9,000	-
Housing units	18	30
Market-rate	14	24
Below-market	4	6
IMPACTS		
Jobs	44	48
Retailing	18	48
Other non-residential	26	-
Daily trip generation	780	1,290
Retailing	420	1,060
Other non-residential	210	-
Residential	150	230
Public school enrollment K-12	5.8	9.6
From market-rate units	4.2	7.2
From below-market units	1.6	2.4
PROJECT SITE ONLY		
New Growth tax levy		
Retailing	\$64,100	\$171,000
Other non-residential	\$64,100	\$0
Residential (market-rate)	\$70,400	\$120,700
Residential (below-market)	\$8,000	\$12,100
TOTAL	\$206,600	\$303,800
City annual revenue		
Parking	\$50,000	\$50,000
Residential taxes	\$80,000	\$130,000
Non-residential taxes	\$130,000	\$170,000
TOTAL	\$260,000	\$350,000
City annual cost (covered by parking fees & tax levy)		
Parking	\$40,000	\$40,000
Residential	\$90,000	\$140,000
Non-residential	\$100,000	\$130,000
TOTAL	\$230,000	\$310,000
City net revenue	\$30,000	\$40,000

IMPACT CONSTANTS

20-Sep-09

MEASURES	Constants	Sources
Assessed value per sq. ft. or unit		
Non-residential sq. ft.		
Retailing	\$375	<i>Pro forma</i>
Other non-resid	\$375	<i>Estimate</i>
Housing units		
Market-rate	\$500,000	<i>Pro forma</i>
Below-market	\$200,000	<i>Pro forma</i>
Sq. ft./job		
Retail	500	<i>Estimate</i>
Other	350	<i>Estimate</i>
Daily trips/unit		
Retail ksf		<i>ITE LUC 814</i>
Other ksf		<i>ITE LUC 710</i>
Housing unit		<i>ITE LUC 230</i>
Pupils/unit		
Market-rate	0.30	<i>Newton Schools</i>
Below-market	0.40	<i>Newton Schools</i>
Tax levy per sq. ft. or unit		
Sq. ft.	\$7.13	<i>Calculation</i>
Sq. ft.	\$7.13	<i>Calculation</i>
Housing unit	\$5,030	<i>Calculation</i>
Housing unit	\$2,012	<i>Calculation</i>
		<i>Calculation</i>
Tax rate (includes. CPA)		
Residential	\$0.01006	<i>Assessors</i>
Non-residential	\$0.01900	<i>Assessors</i>
		<i>Calculation</i>
		<i>Estimate</i>
		<i>Calculation</i>
		<i>Calculation</i>
		<i>Calculation</i>
		<i>Calculation</i>

Austin St Impact 3|Basic

Table 3. AUSTIN STREET TRIP GENERATION IMPACTS

Street #	Use	ITE LUC	Unit type	Rate per unit	# units	Trip ends	% increase to street
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EXISTING USES

12	High turn-over restaurant	932	1000 sq ft	127	4.5	570	
40	Bank (drive-in)	912	1000 sq ft	259	3.4	880	
33-41	Supermarket	850	1000 sq ft	93	53.1	4,950	
46-48	General office	710	1000 sq ft	25	7.3	180	
60	General office	710	1000 sq ft	21	15.5	320	
66-68	Two-family dwelling	230	dwell unit	10	2	20	
70-72	Two-family dwelling	230	dwell unit	10	2	20	
76	Three-family dwelling	230	dwell unit	10	3	30	
	Municipal parking lot	-	Space	8	154	1,230	
	Existing total trip ends					8,200	0.0%

NEW USES

Modest scenario							
	Retailing	814	1000 sq ft	47	9	420	5.1%
	Other non-residential	710	1000 sq ft	23	9	210	2.6%
	Residential	230	dwell unit	8	18	150	1.8%
	Total trip ends					780	9.5%
Aggressive scenario							
	Retailing	814	1000 sq ft	44	24	1060	12.9%
	Other non-residential	710	1000 sq ft	-	0	0	0.0%
	Residential	230	dwell unit	8	30	230	2.8%
	Total trip ends					1,290	15.7%

9/20/2009

Austin St Impact 3|Trips

Table 4. FISCAL IMPACTS (2003 DATA)

Expenditure category	Total from General Fund	Allocation as %		Allocation in \$	
		Residential	Non-residential	Residential	Non-residential
General Government	\$9,789,844	63.6%	36.4%	\$6,229,901	\$3,559,943
Police	\$12,904,976	63.6%	36.4%	\$8,212,257	\$4,692,719
Fire	\$12,367,337	63.6%	36.4%	\$7,870,124	\$4,497,213
Public Safety	\$982,842	63.6%	36.4%	\$625,445	\$357,397
Education	\$107,833,812	100.0%	0.0%	\$107,833,812	\$0
Public Works	\$16,660,301	63.6%	36.4%	\$10,602,010	\$6,058,291
Human Services	\$2,571,347	80.0%	20.0%	\$2,057,078	\$514,269
Culture & Recreation	\$8,218,915	80.0%	20.0%	\$6,575,132	\$1,643,783
Debt Service	\$6,591,148	80.0%	20.0%	\$5,272,918	\$1,318,230
Fixed Costs	\$33,211,118	63.6%	36.4%	\$21,134,348	\$12,076,770
Intergovernmental	\$5,081,422	63.6%	36.4%	\$3,233,632	\$1,847,790
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Total Expenditures					
\$	\$216,213,062			\$179,646,656	\$36,566,406
%	100.0%			83%	17%
Tax levy					
\$	\$187,384,725			\$145,785,983	\$41,598,742
%	100.0%			78%	22%
Expend if capped at levy	\$187,384,725	\$187,384,725	\$0	\$155,693,828	\$31,690,897
Surplus/(deficit)	\$0			-\$9,907,845	\$9,907,845
Expense/revenue ratio				107%	76%

Expenditure share ratio assumptions, 2003

Consideration	Persons	Share
Residents of Newton	84,000	63.6%
Jobs located in Newton	48,000	36.4%
Total persons served	132,000	100.0%
Resident-weighted items		80.0%

Sources:

General Fund expenditures: MA DOR Municipal Databank

Residents: US Census estimate.

Jobs: P. Herr estimate based on 2001 DET data.

Allocation share: P. Herr judgement.

Basic source: CPAC\Economic\CostRev03, 16-Aug-04
20-Sep-09

Austin St Impact 3|Fiscal

Austin impacts.doc

7. ATTACHMENTS

December 18, 2009

1. Matt Cuddy, “Newtonville Business Interviews, December 8, 2009.
2. Matt Cuddy, “Results of Interviews with Newtonville Businesses,” Draft, October 28, 2009.
3. GRAPHICS

ATTACHMENT 1.

NEWTONVILLE BUSINESS INTERVIEWS

Matt Cuddy, revised December 8, 2009

HAPI interviewed a sample of the nonresidential uses in the business district that houses the Austin Street municipal parking lot. We had three purposes in doing so: to gather information on employee parking behavior in the village, to continue the trust-building dialogue between planners (including citizen planners and city staff) and business owners in the village regarding the Austin Street lot, and to publicize the public meeting held on September 24th.

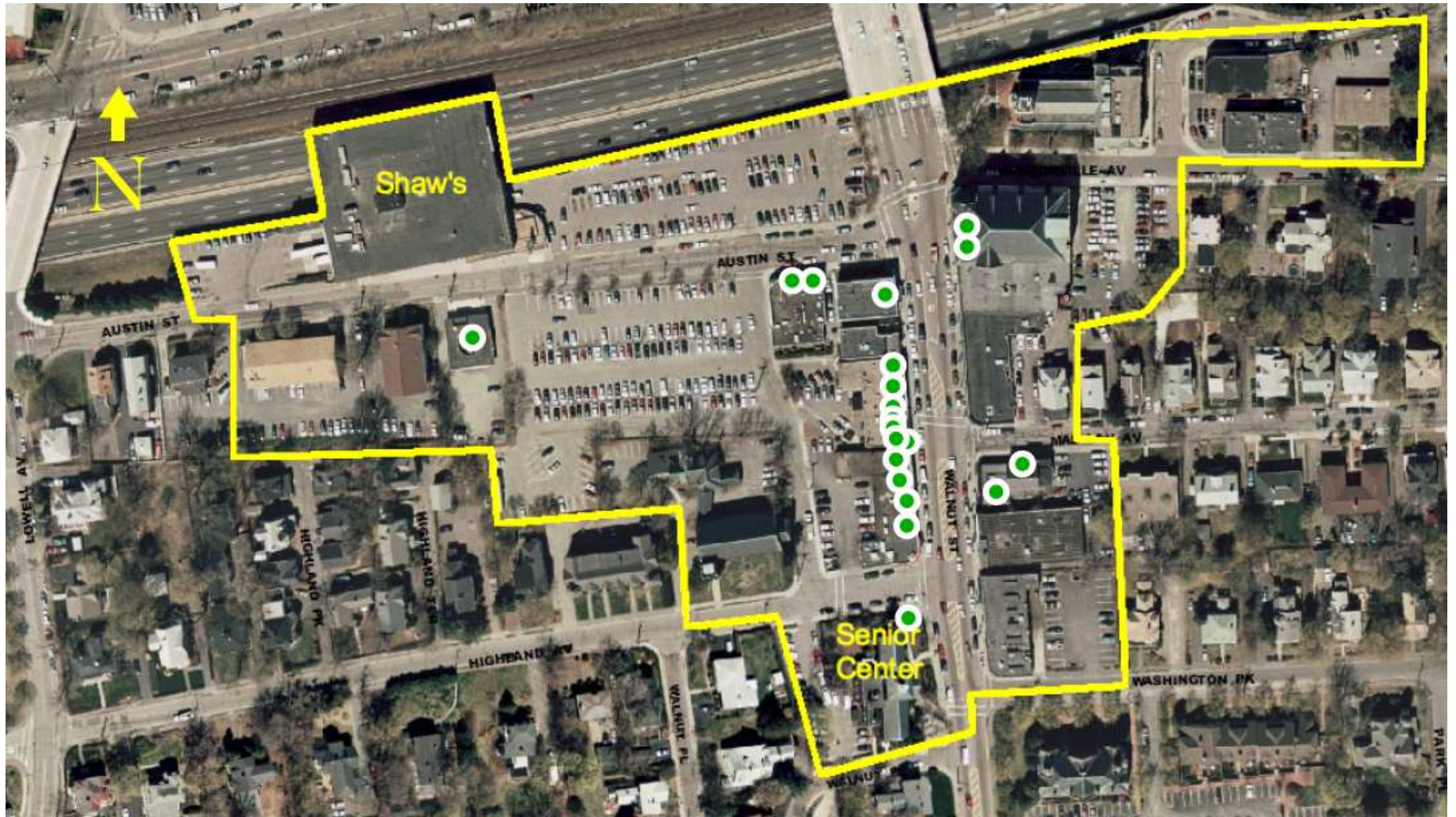
The study area was initially defined according to the appended map marked as Appendix A. However, we focused on businesses closest to the lot: initial results indicated that, as expected, they were most interested in possible development there. We conducted nineteen interviews with business owners or employees, of which sixteen were full, structured interviews following the protocol marked Appendix B. (Newton's Planning Director, Michael Kruse, had prior discussions with two additional businesses and one that was repeated here. The results of his discussions are not included in this report.)

An anonymous summary of interview responses, including unfiltered responses to open-ended questions, is marked as Appendix C. The most consistent takeaways from the interviews are that:

- Increased foot traffic in Newtonville would be welcome.
 - However, it was not clear to everyone whether housing or some undetermined retailer/service provider, especially if redundant with current offerings, would noticeably increase activity levels in the area.
 - That is, everyone would like new development that draws new customers to the area, but there was some skepticism as to whether that would be accomplished at Austin Street.
- Parking availability is generally adequate now.
 - However, there are a few management problems with shared lots designated for particular buildings' tenants.
 - Most employees in the interviewed businesses park in the building-dedicated lots immediately adjacent to their place of employment.
 - Some employees park in the Austin Street lot, and some park illicitly elsewhere. No employee was found to be feeding meters at short-term spots.

The names of the contacted businesses are listed in Appendix D, and their locations are marked on the map in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A. Study area and interview sites



APPENDIX B. Interview script

Hi, my name is Matt Cuddy. I'm a volunteer working with the City of Newton, including the Planning Department and the Housing Action Plan Initiative. We are evaluating the idea of allowing development for part of the municipal parking lot on Austin Street, while accommodating everyone who parks there now. We need to understand how that might affect Newtonville's businesses, so we are surveying all the businesses in the district. [Show map of survey area.] May I ask you a few questions about parking and possible development at the Austin Street lot? OK? Great. First about parking.

Does this business have any dedicated parking spots?

[If "yes"] How many and how far away are they? Are they included with your lease, or did you get them through a separate agreement with a private party?

How many days a week is this store open?

How many people work here on the typical shift?

How often do those people come here by a mode other than their own vehicle?

For the people traveling in their own car, where do you they usually park?

Austin Street lot, private lot, metered space on street, unmetered space on street

[If at meter] Do you ever use 1-hr or 3-hr meters for longer periods? Do you feed the meter to stay extra long, or do you move your car from one short-term space to another?

[If not Austin St. lot or dedicated spaces] How far did you usually have to walk from your car?

Less than a block, Less than 3 blocks, Three blocks or more

Do any of the people who work here have to use their cars during the work day to do their job?

Have you ever had a customer complain about a lack of available parking? If so, when was the most recent time?

Never, More than 6 mo. ago, More than 1 mo. ago, More than 1 wk ago, More recently

Do you generally support the idea of having customers park in the closest spaces, and having employees and commuters park farther away?

Great. That's all I needed about parking. Just a couple more questions.

Are there kinds of uses--residential, office, particular retail, or other--that you would favor being added to this Village Center through new development?

Do you have any other thoughts about the possibility of having new business or residential development on the Austin Street lot?

If you would like to learn more about the latest ideas for the site, and provide your input, please come to the meeting on September 24th, at the New Art Center here in

Newtonville. Here's a flyer. Would it be OK to post it somewhere in the store/office?
[If speaking to an employee, ask that they tell the owner.]

Finally, would you like to stay up to date on the plans for the Austin Street lot? If you give me your e-mail address, I can be sure you get all of the announcements etc. OK--I hope to see you on the 24th. Thanks again. Goodbye.

APPENDIX C. Interview response summary, with detailed comments

Dedicated spaces: How many do you have and where are they?

Of the 19 respondents, all but the Austin Street businesses--Lobster Wok and Kabloom--have specially designated spots for their business. Nearly all of these designated spots are in lots shared with other building tenants. Bank of America also has some spaces in the alley dedicated solely for its use. Rockland Trust has an entire lot for its use.

Everyone with a designated spot or lot had it adjacent to the building and included in their lease.

Employee parking: How do your employees get here, and where do they park?

The responding firms represent about 57 daily workers (including management/owners), 80% of whom (about 46) drive to work on an average day. Nearly all of those workers park in the designated shared lots immediately to the east and west of Walnut Street or in spots designated for their businesses' sole use. Spillover generally goes to the Austin Street lot. Bank of America, the largest employer in the survey, is one of two that uses the Austin Street lot on a daily basis.

Two firms report that their staff park illicitly, either in the Shaw's lot or illegally on the street. No one reported using short-term meters, so the question of feeding meters versus moving the car did not arise.

Customers: Do they complain about a lack of parking, and are they entitled to the closest spaces?

Nine respondents reported never hearing a complaint about parking. Four respondents--three of which are located between Walnut Street and the Austin Street lot--reported getting complaints at least once a week. Two reported that their most recent parking complaint was over a month ago.

Every respondent agreed that customers should have the closest spots.

Open-ended questions: What uses would you favor, and what other comments do you have?

Favored uses:

- Cheesecake Factory
- entertainment, restaurant, retail
- housing, office, brand-name retail
- housing, retail
- housing, retail, offices
- no more services (spas etc.); gimme a draw; real retail
- not really housing; office good for respondent; retail good for everyone
- public bathrooms (for young families)

- public gathering space, entertainment aimed @ high school students
- restaurants such as “Wrap City”
- stores

Other thoughts:

- absolutely must accommodate employees
- anything other than a florist is good [reported half-jokingly by the florist being interviewed]
- parking must remain
- 2-3 minutes is max walk for employees from parking to place of employment
- current senior lot is inadequate
- too many banks
- banks pricing out good variety
- enforcement problems in shared lot
- customers are allowed to “park in” [this firm’s] employees in shared lot
- meters don’t work well for employees
- their drive-through is important for establishing their niche
- [owner feels that] she has been burned in past dealings with city; skeptical about potential to do something good
- enforcement problem in shared lot
- seniors sometimes use the shared lot [improperly: the lot designated for customers and employees in the building, while the seniors visit the City’s Senior Center instead]
- At 10 AM, hordes of office workers from the former church at Walnut & Newtonville Aves move their cars from N’ville Ave to Madison to keep free, legal parking
- concerned about parking adequacy if Austin St lot developed
- generally more development is good in that it brings more foot traffic
- Shaw’s should be concerned about parking overflow if Austin St is developed
- seniors in particular don’t like parking structures
- bring in more true retail, as opposed to services
- need a draw [novel retail etc. that brings additional customers to the area]
- landlord not towing [unauthorized users] in shared lot
- too much change and development now (NNHS) with down economy—wait until things settle down before moving on Austin St lot
- because we have our own lot, we are insulated from what happens with the Austin St lot
- enforcement problems in shared (private/dedicated) lot
- landlord sometimes talks to violators [using shared, dedicated lot improperly] but never tows them
- people don’t understand even the basic two-sided meters we have now [so be carefully about making it more complicated for them]
- Masons and Eastern Star [located at the corner of Newtonville Ave and Walnut St] have evening meetings from 5 until 8 or 9 that bring 50+ cars to the area
- skeptical about potential loss of parking
- love to see some development
- put nothing there (on Austin St lot)

- [the idea of a] parking structure [is] not appealing—would feel like a mall
- Austin St lot never full
- development=more auto traffic, fewer spaces; not good
- no chain retailers, please
- Post Office uses Austin Street lot sometimes
- leave Goodwill alone
- practically speaking, only employees can park in dedicated shared lot—there's no space for shoppers
- I'm “all for it” [development]
- would like police to limit high-school loitering on sidewalk in front of shop, as they prevent people from coming by

APPENDIX D. Businesses interviewed

All About Shoe
Bank of America
Bread & Chocolate
Brookline Bank
Cobella
Fitness Together
Galina's
In Shape for Women
Jin Mi Asian Grocery
Kabloom
Lobster Wok
Masons (as landlord & 2nd floor occupant)
Natural Sense
Newton Senior Center
Newton Wash & Fold
Rockland Trust
Taste Coffee House
The Shoe Horn
UPS Store

Earlier discussions were also held by Newton's Planning Director Michael Kruse with:

Bread & Chocolate
Lorraine's Cleaners
Shaw's Supermarket

ATTACHMENT 2

UTILIZATION: AUSTIN STREET MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT

Matt Cuddy, December 8, 2009

HAPI is studying the feasibility of allowing some development on part of the city-owned parking lot in Newtonville, MA. The current usage of the parking lot is a key driver of the feasibility of development: to the extent that the lot is used for parking, alternate accommodations for that parking demand must be devised, at some cost. This report summarizes the parking study HAPI conducted to understand the nature and amount of parking demand at the Austin Street lot.

Context

The Austin Street municipal parking lot is immediately west of the main pedestrian shopping area in the historic village of Newtonville². Otherwise, it is surrounded by uses with dedicated parking lots. See Figure A1 in the Appendix. It contains 159 parking spaces, of which 32 are temporarily designated only for Newton North High School, one has been leased to a village business, one is damaged and cordoned off, and four are handicapped spots. This leaves 121 spaces available to the public.

Objectives

The aim of this study is to understand how the Austin Street lot is being used, in turn to shed light on the potential impacts of allowing building construction on some part of the lot. Understanding the types of users that use the lot will likewise allow us to identify appropriate strategies to accommodate the different users. For example, one interviewee--the director of the Newton Senior Center on Walnut Street--commented that seniors particularly dislike structured parking. This suggests that to accommodate their current demands on the lot with a structure could be difficult at best, perhaps requiring special efforts at illumination, interior visibility, and easy pedestrian access. Similarly, short-term and/or unfamiliar lot users are less willing to walk to and from their cars than those who park for long durations or visit the lot frequently and are knowledgeable about walkways etc.

The study is designed to estimate total parking demand at the Austin Street lot and its easy alternatives, and to identify different types of users of the lot.

Approach

This study considers the utilization of the Austin Street lot and the nearby alternatives to it. The study area is depicted in Figure A1. The study period extended for the duration of meter operation and parking enforcement in the lot: from 8 AM to 6 PM. Considering only days when the meters are running, we chose days likely to show the highest parking

² Newtonville's core shopping area actually contains two nodes, one north and one south of the turnpike. However, interviews and direct observation suggest that the turnpike presents an effective barrier to pedestrian traffic between the two sides of Newtonville's shopping area. Therefore, this study considers only the part of Newtonville south of the turnpike, which is served by the Austin Street lot. Throughout this report, the terms "Newtonville," "village," and so on refer to the part of the shopping district south of the turnpike.

utilization rates: we excluded Mondays³, school vacation days (parent-shoppers prone to be on vacation), and foul weather, which is understood to suppress shopping activity.

On two sunny, unseasonably warm days in the week of October 19th, we recorded license plates every half hour in the Austin Street lot, which allows us to estimate the duration of use of particular parking spaces, as well as space and lot occupancy by time of day. For the purposes of this study, we defined three zones in the Austin Street lot. See Table 1. The zones are also marked in the map in Figure A2.

Table 1. Zones in the Austin Street Parking Lot

	Number of spaces available to the general public	Maximum parking period	Parking price
Zone A	48	3 h	\$0.50/h
Zone B	53	12 h	\$0.25/h
Zone C	20	3 h	\$0.50/h

Every hour, we also counted parked cars in the lots and blocks closest to the village business district served by the Austin Street lot. Those other lots and blocks are marked in Figure A1.

With the time remaining between parking count passes, we augmented the data collection in one of two ways. On some occasions, especially in the morning, we observed the east end of the Shaw's Supermarket lot to estimate the rate at which the lot serves Newtonville businesses other than those in the Shaw's building. (Discussions with Newtonville business owners and direct observation indicated that the Shaw's lot, and especially the section closest to Walnut Street, serves Newtonville at large more than Shaw's itself.) At other times, particularly in the afternoon, we surveyed drivers returning to their parked cars.

³ This was at the suggestion of a parking enforcement official on the scene during a pilot run, who indicated that a number of the local restaurants and spas were not open on Monday.

Results

Figure 1. Parking space use at the Austin Street lot: 121 spaces available to the public

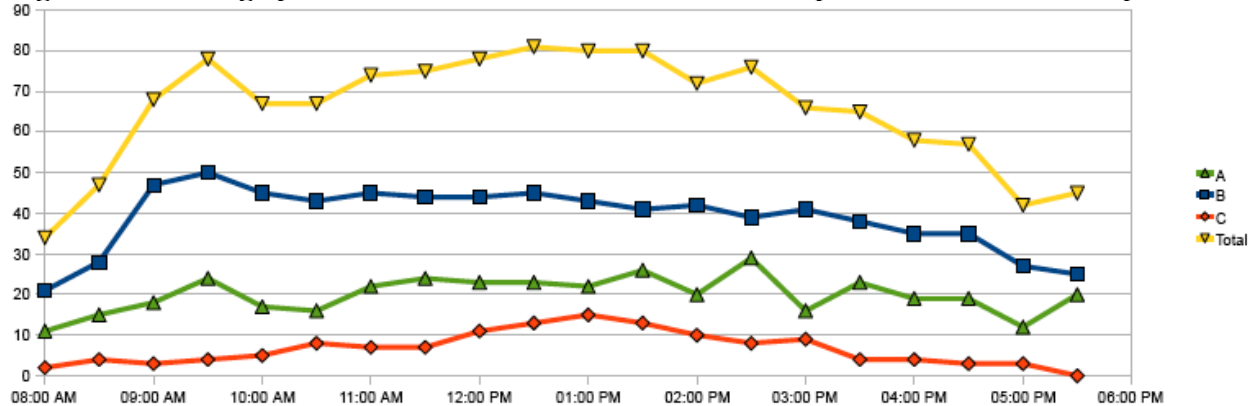
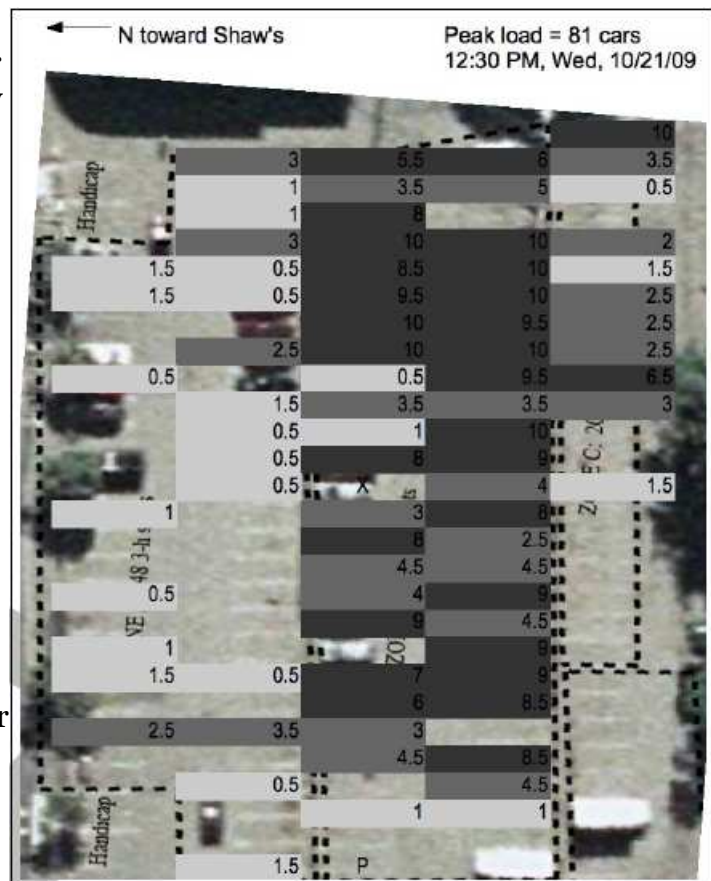


Figure 1 depicts usage of the Austin Street lot by hour and by zone. The data points shown at each hour is taken from the day in study that had the highest total lot use at that hour. The peak loading, 81 vehicles in 121 spots, occurs at 12:30 PM.

Figure 2 shows the occupancy of the Austin Street lot at the peak half-hour in the study: 12:30 PM on Wednesday the 21st of October. The numbers in the shaded rectangles indicate the duration of stay of the particular vehicle in the particular spot. To be clear, the total uninterrupted parking duration is listed, without regard to how much of that time had passed as of 12:30 PM. The duration does not include other time that the given vehicle may have spent in another spot in the lot. The rectangles are shaded according to the duration of stay: the lightest color is for vehicles that stayed for less than 2 hours, the middle color is for vehicle stays ranging from 2 to 5 hours, and the darkest color is for vehicles staying for more than 5 hours.



There is a concentration of long-term parkers in what could be considered the prime parking spots for serving the businesses that depend on the lot to serve customers. The only businesses near the lot that do not have dedicated parking for customers are on Walnut Street, east of the lot, which is toward the top of the page. There are two midblock pedestrian alleys from

the parking area to the shopping district on Walnut, both of which are visible from the lot.

Figure 3. Short-term parking use at Austin St lot and on nearby streets

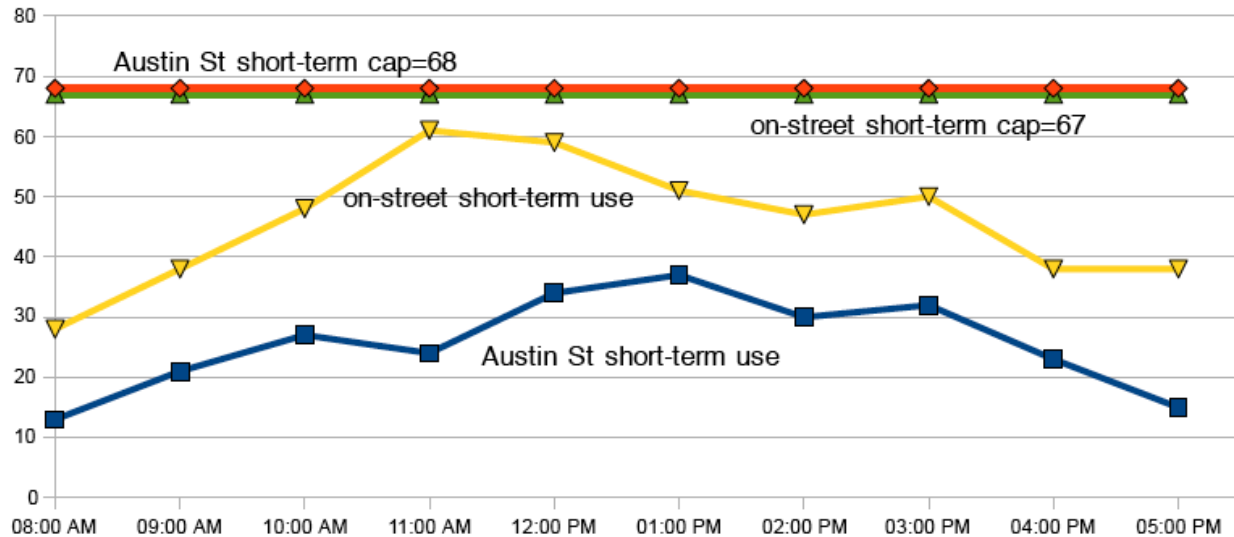


Figure 3 is a plot of the peak parking occupancy by hour for all of the short-term spaces we considered. This includes spaces in Zones A and C in the Austin Street lot, which are 3-hour spots, and the 1-hour spots (some metered and some free) on the streets shown in Figure A1. Figure 3 shows that while the on-street parking in Newtonville is nearly full at 11:00 (61 of 67 spaces), the short-term parking in the Austin Street lot never exceeds 60% utilization. Of course, these numbers obscure important differences between street blocks in Newtonville and between parts of the Austin Street lot. For example, at peak times, all of the on-street spaces on Walnut Street are often taken, while the available spots are on side streets.

The east end of the Shaw's lot was observed for roughly 3 hours in 10-to 20-minute increments over two days. During that time, shoppers parked in that part of the Shaw's lot to do business elsewhere in Newtonville at a rate of roughly 16 vehicles per hour. Among users of the east end of the lot, people with business elsewhere in Newtonville outnumbered people with business at Shaw's by a ratio of roughly 4 to 1. At least two commuters were observed to park in the Shaw's lot and walk directly to the commuter rail, whereas the majority of people parking in the east Shaw's lot appeared to be very short term users.

Six interviews with users of the Austin Street lot were conducted, all of whom parked at the 12-hour meters. Four of them were employees, and two were commuters.

Conclusions

The maximum parking load we found in the lot is 81 full spaces, of 121 available. This is comparable to the 2007 findings of the City of Newton Traffic Engineer's office, which found a maximum load of 90 full spaces at a time when 155 were available.

We found peak lot occupancy at lunch time. We also found peak occupancy of the short-term and long-term parking alternatives in Newtonville at lunch time. Peak occupancies at these alternatives, all of which are closer to the uses they serve, are higher than peak occupancy at the Austin Street lot.

We found 28 long-term lot users (parking for more than five hours) in the 53 12-spots at the time of peak lot occupancy. We found that they tend to concentrate in the 12-h spaces closest to the businesses of Newtonville, which would be the most effective Austin Street lot spaces in meeting short-term shopping demand.

We found employees, commuters, and short-term shoppers among the users of the 12-hour spots.

We found that Newtonville shoppers use the east of the Shaw's lot an average of once every four minutes, and that their stays tend to be quite short.

Appendix

Figure A1. Austin Street lot along with off-site parking considered in study



Figure A2. Parking time limit zones in the Austin Street lot



ATTACHMENT 3 GRAPHICS

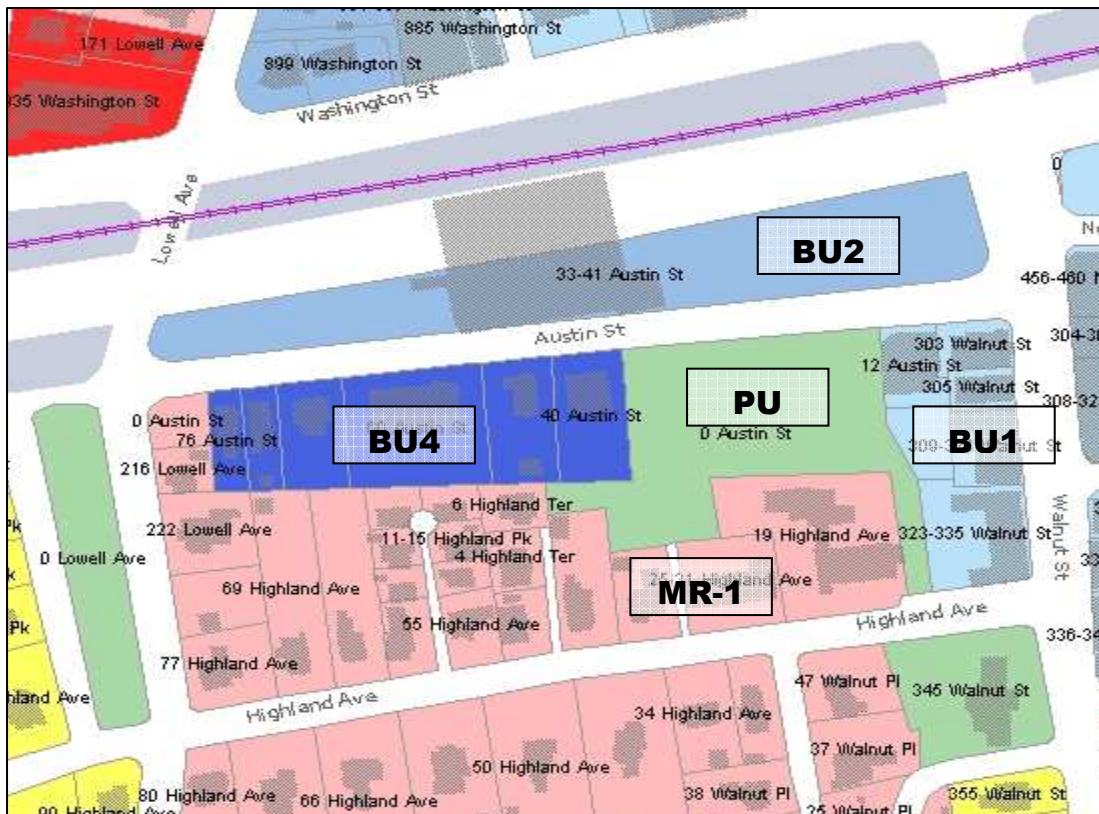
These are the files for the graphics on following pages. The files will be posted (along with this document) on the Newton Planning & Development Department website at (site to be determined).

Austin Development Parcel.pdf	765 KB	10/26/09	Surveyed site plan
Vicinity Zoning.doc	307 KB	11/13/09	Zoning map
Austin Assess map.jpeg	100 KB	8/22/09	Vicinity map
Newtonville vic assess photo.jpeg	183 KB	3/11/09	Assessors vicinity air photo
Newtonville City Base Map.pdf	312 KB	3/12/09	Newtonville map
Newtonville City air photo.pdf	487 KB	3/12/09	Newtonville air photo
Oblique view N.doc	770 KB	5/20/09	Virtual Earth air photo
Oblique view S.doc	870 KB	4/14/09	Virtual Earth air photo

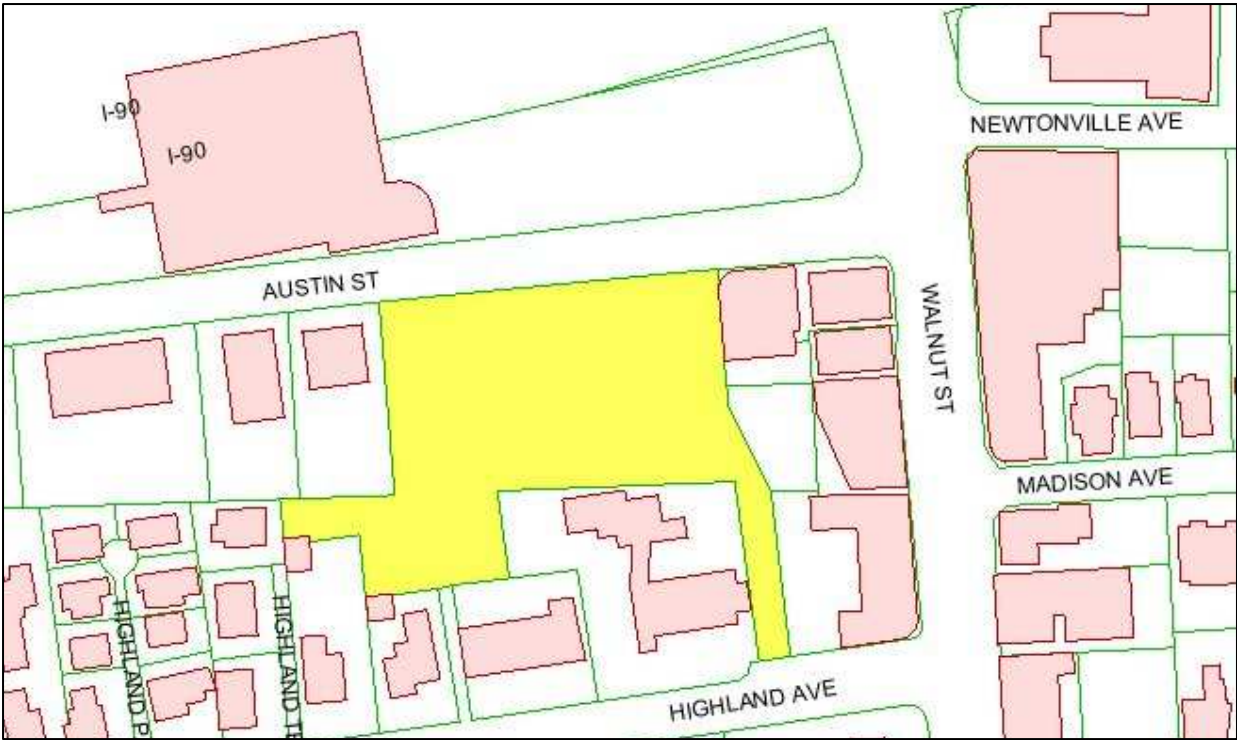
The Austin Street Development Parcel



Vicinity Zoning



Austin Assessors Map



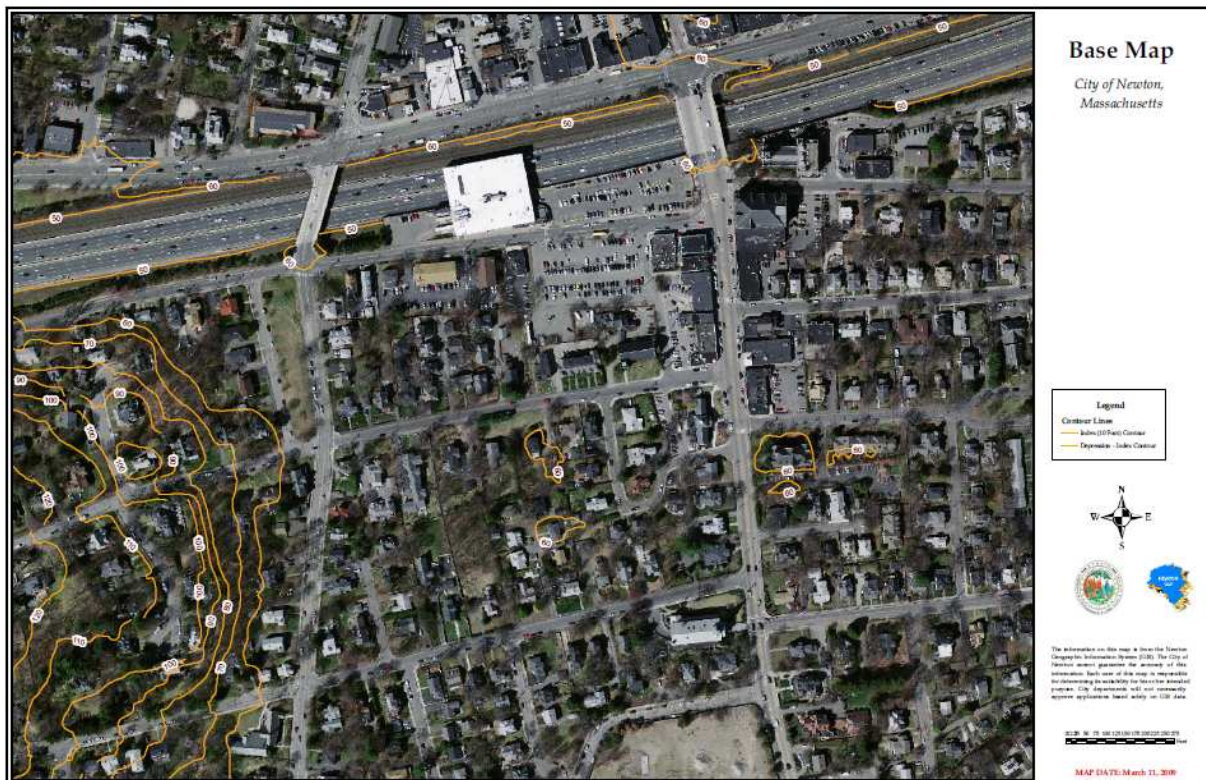
Newtonville vicinity Assessors photo



Newtonville City Base Map



Newtonville City Air Photo



Oblique View North (Virtual Earth)



Oblique View South (Virtual Earth)

